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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000457

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BETTER TO JOIN AL-SHABAAB THAN DRINK BEER IN THE METRO

Classified By: PolCouns Marc Koehler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Summary: Sweden was recently the target of a recruiting visit by an al-Shabaab spiritual leader, Xasaan Xussen, and a counter-visit by the Somali Minister of Justice, Abdirahman Janaqoo. The MFA and security service are concerned about the radicalization of Swedish-Somali youth by al-Shabaab, especially given the low assimilation rate of the Somali diaspora. There are currently around 20 known Swedish-born freedom fighters with al-Shabaab in Somalia; some have died fighting. End Summary.

12. (U) Xasaan Xussen, a known spiritual leader for the Somali terrorist organization al-Shabaab, spoke at a conference in the Bellevue Mosque in Gothenburg on July 2-5, according to the press and MFA. Xussen, who resides in Kenya, traveled on a Kenyan passport to Sweden, Norway and Finland. At the time, the MFA did not know which Schengen country issued the visa, but it allowed him to transit all three Nordics without going through immigration checks. The EU and UN do not list al-Shabaab as terrorist organizations.

13. (U) The Bellevue Mosque is one of the largest mosques in Gothenburg, with about 5,000 members, and the majority of its members are of Somali origin, according to the local press. The mosque was previously investigated by SAPO, the Swedish Security Police, for receiving funds from al-Haramein, a Saudi-based religious charity designated by the UN as a terrorist organization. Miras Bektasevic, a Swedish-Bosnian who was convicted of terrorist crimes in Sarajevo in 2007, reportedly visited the mosque in the past.

14. (U) The Swedish Security Police, SAPO, publicly announced it was aware of Xussen's visit. Malena Rembe, Chief Analyst at the Counter-Terrorism Unit, said it is "highly unusual" for persons spreading that kind of message to come to Sweden and speak openly. According to Rembe, Xussen is very controversial in the Muslim community, particularly among Somali-Swedes, and there is concern among the Somali diaspora that Xussen visited Sweden to recruit young people and collect money for al-Shabaab. While al-Shabaab is not active in Sweden, according to SAPO, there are currently around 20 Swedish citizens in Somalia fighting for al-Shabaab and a handful of persons with Swedish passports have been killed there. So far the organization's attacks have been focused on targets in Somalia, but the group has threatened to attack an individual in Sweden, Rembe said.

15. (C) In a July 17 meeting with poloffs, Ambassador Marika Fahlen, Director of the MFA's West Africa and Horn of Africa Department, said the Swedish government is watching closely al-Shabaab activity in Sweden. There are about 25,000 Somalis living in Sweden, of whom 8,000 are citizens. Fahlen said a large percentage of the Somali diaspora are Swedish-born minors. Sweden has "failed at integrating" Somalis into society, she lamented. The Somali community has the lowest assimilation rate of all immigrant communities in Sweden. There is a high rate of unemployment among young

adults and, according to Fahlen, some parents would rather see their sons "fighting for al-Shabaab and the homeland than drinking beer in the metro." The Somali diaspora is poorly integrated in Swedish society--it has the lowest percentage of entrepreneurs among immigrant groups.

¶6. (C) Due to great concern over Xussen's recruiting visit, supporters of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) immediately brought Somali Justice Minister Abdirahman Janaqoo and two parliamentarians to Sweden. Janaqoo denounced al-Shabaab recruitment and warned young people not to travel to Somalia. The Justice Minister made public appearances at a mosque in central Sweden and at a Somali community organization outside of Stockholm, and he held meetings with Swedish officials. Fahlen said Janaqoo's visit was also part of an effort to collect money to support the TFG. The TFG depends on remittances, she said, estimating the international total to range between \$1.2 and 1.7 million annually.

Taking Swedish Concerns to the U.S. and EU

¶7. (SBU) Fahlen said she was involved with the drafting of the EU policy statement on Somalia, which should be presented on July 27 during the GAERC. She remarked that it was difficult to incorporate language in the statement that both committed resources to engaging members of the Somalia diaspora productively and, at the same time, prevented the diaspora from doing "bad things." Fahlen also remarked that her recent meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson had been "extremely beneficial."

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Fahlen plans to visit Washington in September, and would appreciate appropriate meetings. She also expressed strong interest in further developing the visitor program between the Somali diaspora in Minneapolis and in Sweden, initiated by Embassy Stockholm in 2007, to address integration struggles.
SILVERMAN